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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

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New York

President:	Mr. Allen	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	China	Mr. Lie Cheng
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Albanai
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Tenya
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United States of America	Mr. Hunter

Agenda

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (S/2018/771)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Guinea Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (S/2018/771)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Guinea-Bissau to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Aristides Gomes, Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, and I request the Protocol Officer to escort him to his seat at the Council table.

Mr. Aristides *Gomes, Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.*

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. José Viegas Filho, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau; His Excellency Mr. Mauro Vieira, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission; and Ms. Elisa Maria Tavares Pinto, spokesperson for the Economic Community of West African States Women, Peace and Security Network.

Ms. Tavares Pinto is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Bissau.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/771, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau.

At this meeting, we will hear briefings by Mr. José Viegas Filho, Ambassador Mr. Anatolio Ndong Mba, Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012), concerning Guinea-Bissau, Ambassador Vieira and Ms. Tavares Pinto.

As the third meeting of the Council this morning and with so many briefers, I would like to remind Council members that they are encouraged to speak for no longer than five minutes, as set out in document S/2017/507, and encourage our briefers also to be concise.

I now give the floor to Mr. Viegas Filho.

Mr. Filho: I thank the Security Council for this opportunity to introduce the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/771) on the situation in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). I am honoured to brief the Council for the first time since I assumed office, on 28 May.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of His Excellency Mr. Aristides Gomes, Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau, with whom I am honoured to share this platform. I commend his initiative to travel to New York to personally apprise the Council of his Government's efforts at this crucial phase in the country's transition, with legislative elections foreseen in the very near future.

I would also like to welcome your initiative, Mr. President, to invite the voice of civil society and of women of Guinea-Bissau to this meeting, through Ms. Elisa Tavares Pinto. Her perspectives and insights will, no doubt, further enrich the Council's deliberations.

As the Secretary-General's report is before members, I will limit my statement to recent political developments and the activities of UNIOGBIS. I will then be ready to answer any questions Council members may have in the private consultations.

Since my arrival in Guinea-Bissau, the political and security situation has remained relatively calm. Authorities and political actors have focused on preparations for the legislative elections scheduled for 18 November. I have actively used my good offices with national and international partners to support the full implementation of the 2016 Conakry Agreement, with special emphasis on the ongoing preparations for the elections. I have prioritized engaging national stakeholders on the electoral process and met regularly with the President of the Republic and the Prime

Minister to stress that respect for the existing legal framework and the electoral calendar is indispensable for sustained stability. I also routinely convened and led meetings of the group of five international partners in Guinea-Bissau, working to maintain our unified stance on the need for the timely holding of elections and to urge the Prime Minister to adopt a coordinated approach with national authorities and international partners.

At the regional and international levels, I visited Lomé in June to meet with the Presidents of Guinea and Togo, in their capacities as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mediator for Guinea-Bissau and then Chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, respectively, to exchange views on the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and advocate for financial and material support from the subregion for the upcoming elections.

In July, I attended the Conference of the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP) in Cabo Verde to discuss the persisting technical and financial challenges confronting the electoral process, and to appeal for technical and financial support for Guinea-Bissau. To those ends, I held bilateral meetings with the Presidents of Angola, Brazil, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, as well as the Prime Minister of Cabo Verde and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal.

Later in July, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government discussed the situation in Guinea-Bissau during its fifty-third ordinary session. The summit, inter alia, approved funds that contributed to filling the gap in the electoral budget, and called for legislative elections to be held on 18 November, as scheduled. I intend to continue my engagement with relevant national and international actors as preparations for the elections enter the final stages.

While key provisions of the Conakry Agreement have been implemented, a national dialogue round table for the adoption of a stability pact is yet to be held. The Government has launched related consultations with political parties represented in the National Assembly and intends to broaden consultations to include civil society so as to have the pact adopted in early October, before the start of the election campaign. UNIOGBIS will continue to work closely with the Government and to strengthen civil society engagement in the process. We are, however, conscious that the holding of timely and credible elections is of paramount importance at this juncture. This is a basic short-term goal that must be accomplished to usher in the new political dispensation for further reforms and consolidation.

Preparations for the legislative elections continue to face difficulties. The Government set a 30-day time frame for voter registration, starting on 23 August, in spite of disagreements voiced by some political parties, since the law stipulates a 90-day period for the process. Moreover, the arrival of biometric kits for the process has been delayed. The Government of Guinea-Bissau is working closely with Nigeria, Cabo Verde and Timor-Leste to expedite the arrival of the kits.

I am pleased to report that a funding gap in the budget for the elections may have been closed following pledges by several international partners, including Italy, Japan and the United States, as well as ECOWAS, the European Union and the Monetary and Economic Union of West Africa. UNIOGBIS will persevere in its efforts to support the Government in the urgent materialization of such pledges. In that regard, I welcome the recent disbursement of $500,000 by ECOWAS to the electoral basket fund.

Steps are also being taken towards ensuring that elections are conducted peacefully. In that context, and in response to a request from the Government, ECOWAS intends to reinforce the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau ahead of both the legislative elections in 2018 and the presidential election in 2019. UNIOGBIS will continue to provide the necessary and possible support to efforts to ensure a peaceful and secure environment for the entire electoral process.

UNIOGBIS continues to work closely with the ad hoc commission of the National Assembly on the review of the Constitution and has made efforts towards enhancing civil society participation in upcoming consultations. In August, the Mission provided technical and financial support for a retreat with the members of the commission to initiate the review of the draft constitution, which the commission intends to submit for consideration by the newly elected National Assembly.

Concerning the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime, UNIOGBIS, in coordination with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, has reinforced its support to national authorities, including through the co-location of specialized personnel from within the mission's existing supports with law enforcement agencies in Bissau and the regions. Partly

as a result, national authorities have continued to seize illegal drugs transiting through the international airport in Bissau, the Transnational Crime Unit has resumed operations, and cross-border controls have been strengthened. In response to a Government request, UNIOGBIS is also providing technical assistance for the development of a national action plan to combat drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. Problems, however, are persistent and much has yet to be done until the situation can be considered to be under control.

A significant development relating to gender equality and women's empowerment was the adoption, on 2 August, of a gender parity quota law setting a minimum of 36 per cent for women's participation in the lists of candidates for legislative and local Government elections, as well as for appointments to key decision-making positions. The draft is expected to be promulgated into law by the President before the November elections. UNIOGBIS will continue to support the process.

It is my impression that the recent political developments in Guinea-Bissau offer a possibility for a more favourable appreciation of the country's situation. It seems now more likely than a few weeks ago that legislative elections will take place as scheduled on 18 November. The consolidation of long-term stability remains contingent on the successful holding of legislative elections and on how the country manages the reform process. Far-reaching reforms remain imperative to prevent a future relapse into political and institutional instability. I therefore urge international partners to maintain and increase their political, technical and financial support to help national institutions during and beyond the legislative and presidential elections. I also welcome the continued engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission in helping sustain attention to, and funding for, peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau.

In conclusion, I would like to commend ECOWAS for its effective and continued engagement in Guinea-Bissau in a sustained manner in playing a critical role in helping national stakeholders find the path to lasting peace and stability. I also express my sincere appreciation to all bilateral and multilateral partners, especially the African Union, the CPLP and the European Union, together with ECOWAS, for their continued partnership and commitment to the consolidation of peace in Guinea-Bissau. I also salute the contribution of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, chaired by my friend the Ambassador of Brazil. I would like also to convey my gratitude to the Security Council for its close monitoring of the situation and continued commitment to promoting peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau. I will be ready to answer members' questions.

The President: I thank Mr. Filho for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Ndong Mba.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Before I begin my briefing, allow me to warmly welcome His Excellency Prime Minister Aristides Gomes and His Excellency Mr. João Ribeiro Butiam Có, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities. Their presence at this meeting is clear proof of the considerable interest in the new dynamic promoted by the authorities in Guinea-Buissau to bring the country back to a state of peace, stability and respect for constitutional order.

I have the honour to inform the members of the Security Council, in my capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012), concerning Guinea-Bissau, of my visit to Bissau and Conakry from 25 to 29 June. It was the second visit to Guinea-Bissau by the Sanctions Committee Chair, the most recent visit having been undertaken by my predecessor, Ambassador Rosselli of Uruguay, in mid-June 2017. The purpose of my visit was to gain first-hand information on the effective implementation of the sanctions measures imposed under resolution 2048 (2012) and to discuss progress in the restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau. I was accompanied on my visit by a representative of the Secretariat. Representatives of the local Embassies of China, Côte d'Ivoire, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom joined me and participated in the meetings I held in Bissau and Conakry.

During our discussions, I emphasized the importance of continuing the dialogue and engagement with the many national and international stakeholders with the aim of seeking a way out of the political impasse in Guinea-Bissau and finding a lasting solution. I also stressed that the international community should continue to support Guinea-Bissau, especially in the light of the upcoming legislative and presidential elections and related technical and financial issues, and that it should take concrete measures to create a stable political environment.

I emphasized that the Security Council continues to attach importance to the situation in Guinea-Bissau and that the overall objective of the sanctions regime was not to punish, pressure or change the leadership, but rather to contribute to the establishment of stability in the country and support positive change in the subregion. There is still some confusion about the scope of the travel-ban restrictions, and I made sure to explain the procedures to the authorities during my visit.

While the situation in Guinea-Bissau remains generally stable and shows encouraging progress, the political uncertainty in the light of the upcoming elections threatens to undermine the calm in the country. To date, the constitutional order does not seem to be directly threatened, but the uncertainty over the division of power between the President and the Prime Minister continues to be the basis of political disputes. In addition, the political leaders still have to draft and implement important reforms, particularly in the security and justice sectors.

International and regional efforts and initiatives to find a lasting solution to the political crisis seem to have been effective so far. However, the international community should continue to monitor the situation in the country closely, also taking into account that some key elements of the road map for peace envisaged in the Conakry Agreement on the Implementation of the Economic Community of West African States Roadmap for the Resolution of the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau still need to be implemented.

The security situation is stable given that no incident of significant violence has been recorded, the army does not interfere in politics and, in general, human rights are respected. However, there is still great concern over the activities related to transnational crime and illicit trafficking. The feeling and the view of most of the interlocutors was that the sanctions had been effective in deterring possible disruptive elements. However, many interlocutors continue to demand that sanctions be imposed against politicians responsible for the political crisis, which is still perceived as an issue that has not yet been fully resolved.

I took note of the initiatives undertaken by the Security Council, the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the ECOWAS Mediator for Guinea-Bissau, Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, the European Union, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) and the international community with a view to supporting and encouraging Guinea-Bissau in overcoming the political stalemate.

The visit reflects the positive momentum for cooperation between the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) and the Government of Guinea-Bissau, which should be maintained and improved. I also noted that the political actors and civil society were keen to discuss and to put forward their views to the Committee, which leads me to believe that an ongoing dialogue between the Committee and the Council and the Bissau-Guineans is necessary.

On 16 July, I reported to the Committee and provided recommendations. In particular, I focused my attention on the need for a timely revision of the sanctions list, taking into account the current circumstances, the developments in Guinea-Bissau and the views expressed by the relevant interlocutors interviewed during my visit.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the authorities of Guinea-Bissau and Guinea-Conakry for their warm welcome and for the fruitful meetings held, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. José Viegas Filho, the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme, Ms. Séraphine Wakana, and her team for the excellent support provided during my visit.

The President: I thank Ambassador Ndong Mba for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Vieira.

Mr. Vieira: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation to address the Security Council in my capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Since my most recent briefing to the Security Council, on 16 May (see S/PV.8261), I have made a trip to Guinea-Bissau and Portugal, from 24 to 27 July, in my capacity as Chair of the configuration. That mission was undertaken to obtain first-hand accounts on the implementation of all the provisions of the Conakry Agreement and, most important, the organization of the legislative elections.

During my visit to Bissau, I consulted extensively with a broad range of stakeholders, including the President of the Republic, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister — Mr. Aristides Gomes — the President of the Supreme Court, several ministers and members of all political parties represented in the National Assembly, as well as some parties not represented in Parliament. I also held meetings with the President of the National Electoral Commission and with representatives of the international community and of the United Nations. In addition, I took part in meetings with civil society representatives of Guinea-Bissau.

In Lisbon, on 27 July, I met with the Director-General of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), Ms. Georgina de Mello, when we discussed the role of the Community in supporting Guinea-Bissau and in helping to find a solution to the political situation.

My mission affirmed that there has been tangible progress in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and in the process of return to normal political life, as compared to the same period last year, when I first visited the country. There is a renewed sense of optimism with regard to a definitive solution to the protracted crisis, and the upcoming elections are seen as a window of opportunity to that end. The Conakry Agreement remains a fundamental point of reference for most political actors; all the stakeholders consulted stressed the need to expedite its implementation.

Among the achievements that I witnessed, allow me to underline the following important developments that took place in the past months: the appointment of a consensual Prime Minister and the formation of an inclusive Government; the approval of a Government programme and of the national budget; and the reopening of the National Assembly.

With respect to the electoral process, during my visit the Government of Guinea-Bissau reaffirmed its intention to hold legislative elections on 18 November. All members of the national authorities whom I met manifested their support for respecting that established date. The holding of elections is also considered by political actors a crucial exercise for the country to return to stability. The election builds on the positive political developments in the past months and the opening of space for political dialogue, as well as the provisions of the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau. Many of my interlocutors also stated that any postponement of the election would prolong the crisis and would be frustrating for the population, the political actors and the international community.

Let me also state that I heard no support for deferring the November election in favour of joint presidential and parliamentary elections in 2019. The President of Guinea-Bissau, His Excellency Mr. José Mario Vaz, received me for a meeting and expressed his full support for my mission in Bissau. On that occasion, he outlined to me his three current priorities for the country: first, the holding of legislative elections on 18 November; secondly, the reform of the security sector, including the establishment of a pension fund for the military; and, thirdly, combating drug trafficking and organized crime — a point that was recently included in the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) by the Security Council.

During my visit, I reaffirmed to all my interlocutors that I have indeed noticed progress in the political situation of the country. I also underlined the importance of holding elections on 18 November as a conclusion to the transition towards stability in accordance with national solutions and in full respect of the Constitution.

It is important to mention that, while stakeholders stressed the importance of holding legislative elections on the established date, there remain significant financial, logistical and coordination challenges for that to happen. In terms of election preparations, I held substantive discussions with the Minister of Territorial Administration and with senior representatives of the Technical Office for Electoral Processes Support and of the National Electoral Commission, who reported advances in the preparation for the elections but were concerned about their slow progress. In that regard, it was noted that some progress had been made on electoral cartography and the preparations for the election budget, although funds were slow to materialize. There remain important technical challenges to address, particularly on the voter registration update, awareness-raising and compliance with the legal electoral process.

Although there is general appreciation of the United Nations and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) support to the electoral process, I was made aware of several areas where differences in approach exist that need to be resolved urgently. Allow

me to highlight four important challenges that were mentioned during my visit: first, managing the limited time available to organize the November elections in line with the Constitution; secondly, the process of updating the voter-registration list in such little time — the process was scheduled to start on 23 August and should last for one month — thirdly, the lack of proper coordination between and among Government entities and UNDP on election-preparation logistics, especially the procurement and sourcing of sufficient voter-registration kits and the conduct of the voter-registration exercise itself — for example, I was informed that the Government has started its own bidding process for the registration kits, in parallel with the UNDP efforts, and that the Government has sought bilateral assistance to obtain the election kits from international partners; and, fourthly, the financial questions. The budget for the elections was assessed by UNDP at $7.7 million, of which the Government of Guinea-Bissau contributed $2 million. Additional contributions have reduced the funding gap to $1.2 million. As mentioned earlier today by Special Representative of the Secretary-General José Viegas Filho, that gap may have been closed following pledges by several international partners. However, I was informed in Bissau that none of the contributions pledged are likely to be disbursed before September, which means that there is an urgent need to cover the costs of the voter-registration operation, if it is to start now.

On 23 August, Prime Minister Gomes held a ceremony in Guinea-Bissau to launch the update of the voter-registration list. However, according to my information, the country has so far received all of the equipment necessary to conduct the process. Allow me to add that the President of the Supreme Court informed me that, although the organization of the November elections in the compressed period should be done by political agreement, there is a risk that, if such consensus is lost, the legitimacy of the whole process could be called into question. The situation could also worsen if the current Government were to be dismissed. I must stress that, ultimately, the organization of the elections is contingent upon the willingness of key political actors to engage in mutual cooperation.

In my meeting with Prime Minister Gomes, whom I would like to thank for welcoming me and supporting my visit, he highlighted the importance of avoiding the recurring situation witnessed in Guinea-Bissau. As mentioned by many other interlocutors, generally peaceful elections are followed by political problems. The Prime Minister expressed his strong commitment to facilitating a stability pact. I was informed that the Government already has a draft framework document that could form the basis for a comprehensive pact. Some of my interlocutors also underscored the importance of enabling civil society and other actors to submit their contributions to the pact.

With regard to reconciliation, the organizing commission for a national conference presented me with its report — "In the Name of Peace" — with the findings and recommendations of consultations conducted with more than 3,000 Bissau-Guineans on the causes of conflict and instability in the country. Representatives of the Women's Council stated that their organization had evolved from the former women's facilitation group and was currently engaged in monitoring the preparations for the upcoming legislative elections and advocating the adoption of a gender quota law. Following my visit, we received positive news that, on 2 August, the National Assembly passed a gender parity, or quotas law, mandating a minimum of 36 per cent women candidates in the legislative and local Government elections.

The military continues to maintain its distance from the political crisis and to respect constitutional order, while the police force continues their efforts to maintain public order and respect human rights. Those are commitments we should encourage to be maintained. Stakeholders acknowledged the key role that the Econopmic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) continues to play in that context and urged ECOMIB and UNIOGBIS to continue providing support during the electoral cycles. There is also support for the need to reform the defence and security sectors and for continued UNIOGBIS and international community assistance to monitor and provide technical assistance in the post-election period.

Before concluding, allow me to make some comments on the importance of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Over the years, the PBF has assumed a strategic position in Guinea-Bissau. Currently, UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team are implementing PBF projects with a combined budget of $7 million, which are mutually reinforcing to political engagement. In that regard, allow me to underline that two important civil society initiatives, whose representatives I met with in Bissau — the Women's Council and the organizing

commission for the national conference — are both beneficiaries of the PBF.

I convened a meeting of the Guinea-Bissau configuration on 13 August to present my report to the PBC, at which we also received updates from a number of briefers, including Mr. José Viegas Filho, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNIOGBIS. On that occasion, Ambassador Tijjani Muhammad-Bande of Nigeria, in his capacity as Chairperson of ECOWAS, also made some remarks about its most recent summit, held in Lomé on 31 July. Ambassador José Luis Fialho Rocha of Cabo Verde, as pro tempore President of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, informed us about the recent decisions taken during the CPLP summit held in Santa Maria, Cabo Verde, last July. He underlined that the Heads of State and Government expressed their support for the ongoing electoral process in Guinea-Bissau and the holding of legislative elections on 18 November, as well as their readiness to contribute materially to its realization. They also called for the solidarity of the international community to ensure the timely implementation of the contributions already announced. On that occasion, we also briefly discussed the visit of the mission of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to Guinea-Bissau on 27 and 28 July, under the chairmanship of Togo.

Following the discussions that took place on 13 August, I would like to make the following recommendations. I welcome the visit to Guinea-Bissau by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. I would also like to take note of the final communiqué of the fifty-third ordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, held in Lomé on 31 July, and take note of its conclusions and recommendations, especially its urging of respect for the date of 18 November for the holding of legislative elections. I also take note of the decision to lift the sanctions imposed by ECOWAS on certain political actors in Guinea-Bissau. I take note of the decisions regarding the country that were approved by the CPLP summit in Santa Maria. I would like to welcome the approval of the gender quota law and the discussions on an inclusive stability pact.

The Guinea-Bissau configuration of the PBC will continue to focus on the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and the preparations for the November elections. We will work with all international partners to that end. ECOMIB and UNIOGBIS have an important role to play in these crucial Guinea-Bissau electoral cycles. We will continue to work closely with Special Representative of the Secretary-General Filho to ensure that the upcoming legislative elections are held according to the constitutional framework and in a credible and fair manner. It is necessary to once again reiterate the importance of holding the upcoming elections on the date set, as a conclusion to the transition towards stability. In that regard, we will continue to be active in mobilizing the resources required for the elections to take place as scheduled. We will also support the United Nations and the international community, in consultation with the Government, in considering ways to strengthen State institutions, especially the justice system. I would like to reaffirm that Guinea-Bissau remains an important example of a sustaining peace approach that offers useful lessons on global partnerships for peacebuilding.

Finally, allow me to inform members of the Council that tomorrow I will host a high-level meeting of the Guinea-Bissau configuration with Prime Minister Aristides Gomes, upon his request. That will be an opportunity for the Prime Minister to have a direct and interactive dialogue with members of the PBC.

The President: I thank Ambassador Vieira for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Tavares Pinto.

Ms. Tavares Pinto (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be here today with the Security Council to represent the Women, Peace and Security Network of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Guinea-Bissau. I am particularly honoured to speak at a meeting with my compatriot and Prime Minister, Mr. Aristides Gomes, as well as the representatives of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations.

Allow me to speak as a citizen and a woman leader in Guinea-Bissau. I thank the speakers who preceded me. I would like to focus my statement on aspects that are specific to women and the role they play in civil society in Guinea-Bissau.

The participation of women and girls is an integral part of the development goals in the particular context of Guinea-Bissau. The historic aspirations and the progress achieved in recent years are especially deserving of recognition in terms of the participation of women. Throughout the history of the country,

women have shown their clear ability to be politically involved, build peace and defend their rights, especially in terms of economic and social development and social cohesion. However, the recurring political and governmental instability have posed an obstacle to the adoption and implementation of necessary and urgent public policies, which have kept women from fully enjoying their rights, especially their civil, political, economic and social rights.

The situation in Guinea-Bissau remains fragile. The socioeconomic conditions are increasingly challenging and are exacerbated by instability, which in turn is having a significant cumulative impact on young people, who are facing an increasing lack of education and employment opportunities and are subjected to the risks of clandestine migration and drug trafficking. Above all, that has an impact on women and girls, who are fighting on a daily basis to support their households and families during such difficult times in an environment that has deteriorated socially, culturally and in terms of intercommunal social cohesion.

My organization continues to play a very important role through the activism of its women members to ease the tensions of the conflict and promote peace in our country. Our objective is to coordinate and optimize women's role and initiatives in prevention, post-conflict rebuilding and the promotion of human rights. We are a regional network that also works to promote gender equality, good governance and democracy. It is made up of a variety of women's organizations fighting for a definitive, lasting peace within our communities while achieving the agenda set out in resolution 1325 (2000).

In 2014, in coordination with civil society and the country's electoral institutions, along with the support of the United Nations system, we actively contributed to the national electoral process by establishing elections monitoring cells to resolve any conflict situations during elections. It was a platform made up of women's organizations that worked towards avoiding and resolving any problems on the ground during the presidential elections with the use of an early-warning system. The unit was made up of 200 women and youth monitors throughout the country, as well 45 other young people who monitored violence and sent real-time text messages on the situation. The groups worked to simultaneously harmonize mediation efforts in order to avoid tensions before, during, and after elections once the results were published. Awareness-raising and civic education campaigns on electoral processes were also carried out to complement those efforts. The results achieved were satisfactory. There was equal access for all candidates to State media, while effective and qualitative involvement by civil society encouraging all parties to work in a climate of trust, solidarity and security led to elections that were deemed to be free, fair and transparent. The role of women was thus shown to be key in the elections. But those efforts did not come to an end in 2014, nor are they limited to the domain of elections.

In all of the political and institutional crises of the country, our organization has encouraged various dialogue initiatives. We participated in the establishment of a group of women facilitators for dialogue among parties in conflict, which made a major contribution in overcoming the 2017 crisis. That group led to the creation of the national women's council of Guinea-Bissau — a broad and inclusive group that is fully representative of the political, religious, ethnic and territorial diversity throughout the different communities of the country and the diaspora.

For the first time we can today say that civil society — with the essential and decisive support of women and the recognition of the United Nations and ongoing support, especially from the Embassy of Canada — has been able to come together with the political parties in conflict, religious organizations, universities, youth organizations and traditional leaders to reflect on and discuss the quest for a solution to the political crisis. The stakeholders decided to create an alliance of civil society organizations in order to follow up on the political dialogue to break out of the impasse in which the Government is stuck. That platform made it possible for us to make a series of recommendations, which are the basis for a draft political and social stability pact. The process is under way. We hope that the pact will be signed by all stakeholders within a new social and cultural development framework as the basis of a new social contract.

At the same time, given the upcoming holding of elections scheduled for 18 November, drawing on our experience in 2014, and moving forward the electoral process, a platform of women and young people was chosen for moving forward the electoral process with the financial support of the Peacebuilding Fund and the technical support of the United Nations. The process will facilitate registering voters, a civic education campaign, media coverage, the electoral campaign and

monitoring possible outbreaks of violence during the electoral process, as well as on election day.

Lastly, I would like to cite as a positive example concerning women, as we are all fully committed together to dialogue with other actors and partners, the recent adoption by the legislature of a gender parity bill to ensure that 36 per cent quota of women on the ballot. That was one of the outcomes achieved through the struggle and the advocacy of the political platform of women that will lead to considerably positive change for Guinea-Bissau, once full and viable stability has been achieved and sustainably ensured.

With a view towards ensuring a more effective partnership between the United Nations and Guinea-Bissau, the goal of which is to build a reconciled, fair and just society, we propose the following recommendations. The United Nations system in Guinea-Bissau should prioritize work geared towards achieving political stabilization by encouraging inclusive national dialogue that will allow for the adoption, monitoring and implementation of a national stability pact. The United Nations system should be more present on the front line to further to give incentive to partnerships so that international assistance can be more effective in implementing national policies. Cooperation networks linking women's and women's youth organizations, with the goal of encouraging and bolstering the civic and political participation of those organizations, must continue to be supported, as well as establishing and energizing a women's monitoring body to assess and publish data on their progress so as to achieve gender equality through partnerships with national research institutions and the latter's international counterparts.

The President: I thank Ms. Tavares Pinto for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the presence among us of His Excellency Mr. Aristides Gomes, Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau, and thanks Mr. José Viegas Filho, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS); His Excellency Mr. Anatolio Ndong Mba, Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012), concerning Guinea-Bissau; and His Excellency Mr. Mauro Vieira, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their excellent briefings. My delegation would also like to express to Ms. Elisa Maria Tavares Pinto, as a representative of Bissau-Guinean civil society, its interest in everything that she has said during our exchange.

Recent developments in the sociopolitical situation in Guinea-Bissau, especially since the positive progress noted in the wake of the extraordinary session of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), on 14 April in Lomé, give reason for hope in the process of exiting the country's crisis. The appointment of a consensus Prime Minister, the establishment of an inclusive Government, the resumption of National Assembly activities and setting the date for legislative elections on 18 November are all achievements that need to be consolidated through both the sustained support of the international community and the firm political will of the Bissau-Guinean political actors. With a view to helping end the political impasse in Guinea-Bissau, the Security Council ,via the adoption of resolution 2404 (2018) on 28 February, conferred upon UNOGBIS three priority support tasks, namely, the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement, the holding of legislative elections and the review of the country's Constitution. In the light of the report (S/2018/771) of the Secretary-General on the status of the implementation of those priorities, my delegation would like to make the following observations.

With regard to the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement, the Secretary-General's report clearly outlines the measures to be taken by national stakeholders so as to move forward the implementation of the ECOWAS road map and the Conakry Agreement. In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire calls on the various parties to pool their efforts so as to achieve the signing of the stability pact, which remains an important step towards bringing about peace in the country. My delegation firmly encourages national stakeholders to pursue consultations and focus on the benefits of achieving the other aspects of the Agreement. We urge UNOGBIS to continue the use of its good offices and to provide technical support to further engage other organizations, as well as civil society, in the process of ending the crisis. In that regard, my country echoes the Secretary-General's encouragement to ECOWAS to continue its

work towards maintaining a constructive dialogue among national actors.

Along those lines, my delegation welcomes the ECOWAS decision to lift the sanctions imposed on certain Bissau-Guinean political actors following the holding of the fifty third ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government on 31 July in Lomé. That decision will undoubtedly contribute to de-escalating the local political environment, thereby enhancing conditions for a constructive dialogue among stakeholders. Côte d'Ivoire reaffirms the central role of the Conakry Agreement, which remains to this day the consensual framework of reference for achieving a lasting solution to the political stalemate in Guinea-Bissau.

With regard to the holding of the legislative elections, it seems crucial to take all the necessary steps to achieve the organization of free, peaceful and credible polls. As the Secretary-General's report emphasizes, the legislative and presidential elections remain at the core of the country's political life. In that connection, they must be held in accordance with the Constitution and national laws and norms. Despite delays involving practical aspects of the elections, national actors, supported by the international community, are working on completing technical preparations for the legislative elections to prevent any chance of postponement.

Accordingly, Côte d'Ivoire commends the perfectly coordinated work done on the ground by the group of five international partners — the Security Council, the United Nations, ECOWAS, the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the European Union — particularly with regard to mustering financial resources, which is a real source of concern. To that end, my delegation is pleased to note the contributions of ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union of $2 million and $1 million, respectively, which will help to fill the financial gap in the electoral assistance project. Côte d'Ivoire would like to take this opportunity to urge countries and organizations to fulfil their pledges.

The review of the Constitution, the third priority entrusted to the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office, remains an important pillar insofar as it will enable the establishment of a new political order that will promote the consolidation of peace in Guinea-Bissau. In that regard, my delegation encourages UNIOGBIS to take whatever measures it deems necessary to provide effective support to the Guinea-Bissau authorities in implementing an inclusive institutional framework that will lay the foundations for a country that is at peace and firmly on the path to development.

The fight against transnational crime, in particular drug-trafficking and money-laundering, represents a major challenge for the authorities of Guinea-Bissau. In this regard, and pursuant to the provisions of resolution 2404 (2018), the joint measures taken by UNIOGBIS and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in this area should be continued and intensified with a view to suppressing drug-trafficking rings and those who long for a return to instability in a country that has already suffered too much. We welcome the fact that President José Mário Vaz and the national authorities as a whole are resolutely committed to this path, having requesting the support of UNODC and UNIOGBIS in designing and implementing a national plan to combat transnational organized crime. We also welcome the efforts of the country's politic l class to adopt a law establishing a 36 per cent quota for women in legislative and local elections and the creation in April 2018 of a Guinea-Bissau council of women.

The major changes afoot in Guinea-Bissau call for adapting international organizations and structures on the ground so that their action can be more effective. That is why my country awaits with great interest the conclusions of the assessment mission conducted in this regard, as well as proposals for restructuring UNIOGBIS. Nonetheless, we must bear in mind that any significant positive developments in Guinea-Bissau during this time still depend on the proper organization and conduct of elections, whose results will determine the nature and scope of the change to be made. Cote d'Ivoire commends the action taken by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and would like to assure him of our full support in this important task. We also take this opportunity to recall the paramount importance of ensuring that Bissau-Guinean stakeholders take firm ownership of the process for emerging from crisis and prioritize the greater good of the country and its people.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that in the next few days Cote d'Ivoire intends to submit a draft press statement on the situation in Guinea-Bissau to the Security Council.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the briefers for their comprehensive statements. I also welcome the presence in the Chamber today of Prime Minister Aristides Gomes of Guinea-Bissau, and thank him for making the journey to New York to participate in our work, which is a very positive signal.

I have five brief comments. First, France welcomes the positive developments in recent months in Guinea-Bissau, including the appointment of Mr. Aristides Gomes as a consensus Prime Minister in a first important step towards the implementation of the Conakry Agreement, which we continue to believe is the only way to bring the country out of its long political and institutional crisis. I would also like to welcome the central role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and more generally by the group of five international partners — ECOWAS, the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the European Union and the United Nations — in achieving those results. It will be crucial to ensure that Guinea-Bissau continues to benefit from strong regional and international support in the months and years to come, and that is a particular responsibility of the Security Council.

Secondly, while encouraging progress has been made over recent months, we expect to see further significant measures over the next few weeks — first and foremost, the holding of elections in November in accordance with the announced schedule. In our view that will be a significant test of the genuine will of the various stakeholders to make progress towards the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement. We expect the Guinea-Bissau authorities to fully engage in the technical preparations for the elections, including voter registration, for which the necessary resources must be made available as soon as possible and the funds allocated for it in the national budget disbursed without delay.

Thirdly, the international community must play its full part in supporting the upcoming electoral process, whether through the provision of financial aid by leading donors or technical assistance by the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union. We have equally high expectations of the Guinea-Bissau authorities. The proper holding of the forthcoming elections is also a prerequisite for any potential lifting of sanctions. In that regard I want to welcome the position of non-interference in political affairs taken by the military authorities in Guinea-Bissau.

Fourthly, in the medium term, lasting peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau will be re-established through progress in other areas, such as the review of the Constitution, which should enable the Bissau-Guinean institutional system to avoid the impasses we have seen in recent months. Those areas also include the fight against organized crime, particularly drug-trafficking — which will not only require resolute commitment from the Guinea-Bissau authorities but also sustained support from the international community, especially the various United Nations actors on the ground — as well as security sector reform, without which there can be no long-term stability in the country, as recent history has shown.

My fifth and last point is that France fully supports the strategic review of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau that has begun under the leadership of former Special Representative Mr. João Honwana. We hope the process will be guided by an unrestricted and objective evaluation of the situation and the needs on the ground independent of the positions that the various stakeholders have expressed on the issue in the past few months. We view this as a useful opportunity to reflect on how to strengthen the scope of the good-offices role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, improve coordination among the various international community actors on the ground and provide the most effective possible technical support, which Guinea-Bissau needs more than ever.

It is still too early to say whether Guinea-Bissau is safely on the path to long-term stability. The next few months, and the legislative elections of November in particular, will supply more answers to our questions in that regard. The supportive role played by the region and, more broadly, by the international community and the Security Council, is all the more important in this decisive period.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, we would like to welcome the presence here with us today of Prime Minister Aristide Gomes of Guinea-Bissau. We would also like to congratulate Mr. José Viegas Filho, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), on his appointment to this important role. We wish him every success in his work and thank him for his briefing.

We have listened carefully to the information shared with us today by Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) concerning Guinea-Bissau, Ambassador Mauro Vieira, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and Ms. Tavares Pinto.

We note the significant progress that has been made in helping Guinea-Bissau to emerge from its political crisis following the decision by President José Mário Vaz to appoint a new Prime Minister and form a consensus Government. We encourage all the political forces in the country, despite their ongoing disagreements, to work with the Cabinet to achieve a sustainable settlement.

We support the work of the country's leaders to prepare for the elections planned for November. We are pleased that the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau is making a significant contribution to supporting the electoral processes, including by mobilizing means from international partners. We support the mission's intention to facilitate constitutional reform, as noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/771), and dialogue should begin on that as soon as possible. In that regard, the time between the parliamentary and presidential elections would be very suitable. We continue to believe that this measure is critical from the point of view of resolving the issues around the Guinea-Bissau Constitution and ensuring the prevention of a relapse into political turbulence there.

We are grateful to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for promoting a political settlement in Guinea-Bissau. We note the decision of ECOWAS to remove the sanctions it imposed on Bissau-Guineans in February, which we think is a very timely step. However, we believe that any arrangements for the country's future should be based on the desires of its own citizens, without pressure or the imposition of ready-made solutions from outside. Only through a response to its genuine national interests can they play a positive role in the work of helping the country emerge from its long-standing crisis.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): I would first like to thank Special Representative Viegas Filho, Ambassadors Vieira and Ndong Mba and Ms. Tavares Pinto for their insightful briefings on the recent developments in Guinea-Bissau. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Prime Minister Gomes to today's important meeting.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands would like to underscore the following three points. The first is the importance of the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement, particularly regarding the holding of legislative elections on 18 November and the signing of a stability pact. The second is the importance of the inclusion of women in political processes, as highlighted by Ms. Tavares Pinto, and the third is the importance of the continued engagement of the Economic Community of West African States Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB).

Let me start by reiterating that the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement and the six-point road map is the only way forward in Guinea-Bissau. As so many people highlighted yesterday, prevention should be our priority, and implementing and abiding by agreements like this one are important steps towards sustainable peace in Guinea-Bissau. We commend the efforts of the newly formed Government to organize legislative elections and reiterate the necessity of organizing free, fair, credible and inclusive elections on 18 November. While we recognize the positive steps taken in Bissau, we are not there yet.

A draft of the stability pact, which will be the foundation of the national round-table dialogue, has been circulated among political stakeholders. An inclusive stability pact is crucial for Guinea-Bissau, laying the foundation for collaboration among the various actors and paving the way for equally important constitutional reform. We therefore urge all the relevant stakeholders to finalize it as soon as possible and before the legislative elections in November.

As stipulated in resolution 1325 (2000) and the sustaining peace agenda, the role of women in peacebuilding cannot be overestimated. As Ms. Tavares Pinto indicated, women have played an extremely important part in breaking through the political impasse in Guinea-Bissau. I also want to reiterate the importance of women's continued engagement both in the upcoming elections and in the country's future political life. In that regard, we want to welcome the establishment of the Bissau-Guinean Council of Women and to request that the Government of Guinea-Bissau, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau and the other international actors on the ground — the African Union, the Economic Community

of West African States (ECOWAS), the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the European Union — continue to collaborate with that new body to ensure women's full and equal participation in Guinea-Bissau.

Lastly, I would like to highlight the important role that ECOWAS has played in Guinea-Bissau, especially through the presence of ECOMIB, which is essential to Guinea-Bissau's stability, and while expressing our appreciation we also express the hope that ECOWAS extends its mandate at least until the end of the presidential elections. A longer-term extension of its mandate will give the Bissau-Guinean population security and help to ensure the holding of elections, both in November of this year and in 2019, when presidential elections are scheduled.

Guinea-Bissau is at an important crossroads in its history. Its stability depends largely on the organization of free, fair, credible and inclusive legislative elections on 18 November. They are the next step in resolving the country's lingering political impasse. It is the Council's responsibility to continue to support Guinea-Bissau at this important time, and we look forward to its continued active engagement.

Mr. Hunter (United States of America): I thank all the briefers for their remarks today. We also welcome Prime Minister Gomes and express our appreciation for his ongoing efforts to foster unity in the Government and prepare for critical elections in November.

The United States is pleased to note the welcome political progress in Guinea-Bissau since April. We commend the political leaders for taking much-needed and long-delayed steps aimed at breaking through a nearly three-year stalemate to get the Government moving again for the well-being of the people of Guinea-Bissau, and encourage them to continue to implement the Conakry Agreement and pursue critical reforms.

Next on Guinea-Bissau's political horizon, we look forward to successful voter registration and free, fair and transparent legislative elections in November. We encourage the international community and Guinea-Bissau's partners in the region to support the Government's efforts to prepare for and execute these elections. We also commend the generous contributions of the Economic Community of West African States to that effort and express our gratitude for its continued leadership as a mediator.

Even with this welcome progress and upcoming elections, the Security Council must remain vigilant, since the consensus agreements that helped to ease the political crisis remain fragile. The United States shares the Secretary-General's concerns about the continued threat that drug trafficking and transnational organized crime pose to Guinea-Bissau and the broader subregion. We welcome the support of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for the Government's reactivation of the transnational crime unit and encourage UNODC to continue to build its capacity in the country.

We also salute the efforts of civil society and concerned citizens to encourage transparency in governance and a culture of respect for human rights in the country. We are encouraged by the ongoing expanding efforts of the Bissau-Guinean Council of Women, in particular its drive for inclusion in the development of the stability pact called for in the Conakry Agreement.

Only a few months remain before critical elections that could solidify the political progress made so far this year. The steps taken to fix the wrongs of so many wasted months of gridlock have been bold and important, but the road to enduring success is long. We will continue to work with the Government as it emerges from this frustrating stall and strives to achieve security and opportunity for all of its country's citizens.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): I would like to begin by acknowledging the presence of Prime Minister Aristides Gomes here today. Sweden has a long-standing relationship with the people of Guinea-Bissau dating back even before its independence. It is in that spirit of close partnership that we are now engaging in support for Guinea-Bissau in the Council.

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing. The mission has a crucial role to play in the coordination of international efforts in support of Guinea-Bissau, not least now in support of the preparations for elections. I also thank the Ambassador Mauro Vieira of Brazil, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. We appreciate the opportunity to draw on the Peacebuilding Commission's strategic advice on Guinea-Bissau.

As has been highlighted today, Guinea-Bissau has seen a number of positive developments over the past

few months. We once again welcome the consensus appointment of a Prime Minister, the formation of an inclusive Government and the reopening of the National Assembly. The recent approvals of the new Government programme and national budget are also positive steps. We welcome the military's neutrality and its posture of non-interference in the political process, and we stress the importance of its continued neutrality moving forward.

The sense of optimism that Ambassador Vieira alluded to in his briefing is encouraging. The elections on 18 November will be a crucial step towards building trust and stability. The ongoing challenges must now be addressed to ensure credible and timely elections within the agreed time frame. We stress the importance of ensuring women and men's equal participation in the upcoming elections both as voters and candidates, and we welcome the adoption of a gender quota law. We encourage the country's leadership to follow up the law with targeted efforts to include women's participation in the political processes at all levels. In that regard, I also welcome the briefing by Ms. Tavares Pinto this morning.

The six-point road map and the Conakry Agreement must be implemented in full. In that regard we take note of the draft framework document for the stability pact that has been developed by the Government. For the pact to be credible and sustainable, we underscore the importance of ensuring that it is underpinned by an inclusive and consultative process.

Guinea-Bissau now needs concerted and coherent international support for the electoral process. It will be important to make full use of the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in preparing for the elections. We commend the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States, which has played an essential role on behalf of the region in finding a solution to the political crisis, and we encourage its continued engagement, especially in the electoral process.

As is often discussed in the Peacebuilding Commission, for a sustainable peace to be truly consolidated, it is always important to address the root causes, including by focusing on constitutional reform, reconciliation, strengthening the rule of law through strong and inclusive institutions, assuring equal access to economic opportunities and respecting, protecting and ensuring human rights. Such reforms will be critical drivers of peace. The international community, in close partnership with the region, should now step up its efforts to support Guinea-Bissau on its path to sustainable peace and development.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Aristides Gomes, Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau, to the Council today, and to thank our briefers, Special Representative Filho, Ambassadors Vieira and Ndong Mba and Ms. Tavares Pinto, for their valuable remarks.

More than three months ago, in mid-May, we commended the encouraging progress achieved towards a solution to the country's political and institutional stalemate (see S/PV.8261). The appointment of an inclusive Government, the reopening of the National Assembly, the election of the President of the National Electoral Commission and the announcement of legislative elections for November sparked optimism about the prospects for a new degree of resolve and normalization. Against that backdrop, the reported delays and lack of concrete measures taken to prepare for the legislative elections raise concern. The timely and credible conduct of the legislative and presidential elections represents a crucial step towards the resumption of peacebuilding and an important element of the Conakry Agreement. I would also like to express our concern about the lack of a substantial review of the Constitution and electoral law. However, we are hopeful about the possibility of progress with the recent announcement of the stability pact consultation, focusing on security reforms and the judiciary.

We therefore call on the Guinea-Bissau authorities to provide firm political direction and assume the leadership of the electoral process, and to step up the required technical preparation and empower the electoral management bodies to implement appropriate efforts to ensure timely and credible elections. Avoiding a new impasse over post-electoral power-sharing will be essential to ensuring stability in the long term.

We commend the adoption of a new law introducing a minimum 36 per cent quota for women's representation in elections and appointments to the National Assembly and local governing bodies. We also welcome the creation of the Bissau-Guinean Council of Women, which aims to promote women's participation in national peacebuilding, reconciliation and political processes. Those measures can help to lay the foundations for a more equal, participatory and

modern society capable of facing its new challenges in development, modernization and growth.

However, we remain concerned about the fact that drug-trafficking and transnational organized crime still represent a serious threat to peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau, the subregion and beyond. In that regard, we call on the country's political leaders and State institutions to take meaningful steps, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant agencies, to prevent and reduce these issues, which could cripple political progress and development for years to come.

With regard to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) concerning Guinea-Bissau, we share the view of the Chair of the Committee that any deliberations about the existing sanctions should not interfere with the present electoral process.

Last but not least, I would like to express our full support to Mr. José Viegas Filho, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the staff of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau and the United Nations country team for their dedication.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I commend Special Representative Filho, Ambassador Ndong Mba and Ambassador Vieira for their insightful briefings on the most recent developments in Guinea-Bissau and their tireless efforts to bring peace and stability to the country. I thank Ms. Tavares Pinto for highlighting the role of civil-society organizations and women's groups in facilitating a dialogue between the main political actors. I also warmly welcome the presence of Prime Minister Gomes at this meeting. We endorse the Secretary-General's semi-annual report (S/2018/771) and would like to follow up with some observations.

We welcome the encouraging steps taken by all parties to end the protracted political stalemate in Guinea-Bissau, including the approval of the Government programme and the adoption of a budget. We greatly appreciate the good offices of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) and the mediation efforts of the Economic Community of West African States, whose collective efforts have led to those positive developments.

There is now a need for expeditious preparations for the upcoming legislative and presidential elections. We welcome the commitments by international partners to providing the necessary technical, logistical and financial support for the electoral process and call on the Government of Guinea-Bissau to make progress on the measures needed for the timely, credible and fair conduct of the elections. We also call on all parties to promptly take the necessary steps to implement the remaining provisions of the Conakry Agreement, including the adoption of a stability pact and constitutional review. Political stability can be achieved only through the continuing implementation of political reforms aimed at strengthening governing bodies, and in order to develop guiding principles for those reforms the country needs an open and inclusive nationwide dialogue.

In addition to that, we need to work on establishing the most effective possible measures for ensuring the country's stability and resilience through increased support to existing development plans and the United Nations peacebuilding plan, with a special focus on education and health care. Ensuring the participation of women and young people at every stage and level of the political process is equally important. We call on all donors to provide the necessary funds for implementing all such measures.

Another matter of concern for all of us remains the perils of drug-trafficking and transnational organized crime, with their multidimensional impact on the economy, overall security and community and individual well-being. National engagement is critical to implementing the various international programmes and projects aimed at strengthening the security, judicial and law-enforcement sectors. We therefore call on the Guinea-Bissau authorities to continue strengthening the country's national institutional framework and response to these perilous threats, in close cooperation with UNIOGBIS, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and INTERPOL.

In conclusion, we would like to extend our full support to the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and reaffirm our readiness to cooperate closely with all the relevant parties to support the peacebuilding and consolidation efforts in Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Tenya (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of today's meeting and appreciate the briefings by Special Representative José Viegas Filho, Ambassadors Anatolio Ndong Mba and Mauro Vieira, and Ms. Tavares Pinto. We would like to welcome

His Excellency Mr. Aristides Gomes, Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau, and to take the opportunity of his presence here to highlight the political progress that has been made in recent months in Guinea-Bissau. We welcome his appointment by consensus, the formation of an inclusive Government, the reopening of the National Assembly and the establishment of the date of 18 November for holding legislative elections.

We believe that those developments are encouraging and should make it possible to move forward with the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement and the Guinea-Bissau six-point road map, established to resolve the political crisis in the country. We would also like to take advantage of this meeting to emphasize three specific aspects where we believe we must redouble our efforts in order to consolidate the progress that has been made and achieve a sustainable peace in Guinea-Bissau.

The first is the holding of legislative elections in November. Establishing a free, transparent and inclusive electoral process will help to ensure the normal conduct of the 2019 presidential elections. That involves promoting a democratic climate and ensuring the broad participation of citizens, particularly women and young people, and of all the country's political forces. It will be essential to take special care of the technical, logistical and financial aspects of organizing the elections. We welcome the support provided by the United Nations Development Programme in that regard, and we note the importance of ensuring that the international community continues to cooperate with the process.

My second point is about the fight against organized crime. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and several of my colleagues who spoke before me have already made clear, we are concerned about the presence in the country of transnational organizations involved in illicit activities, in particular the increase in activities such as drug trafficking that undermine the social fabric and the institutions required to build a sustainable peace. We appreciate the work being done by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Guinea-Bissau, together with the United Nations Integrated Office for the Consolidation of Peace in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), to overcome those challenges, including the reactivation of the Transnational Crime Unit.

Third is comprehensive attention to the root causes of the conflict. In that regard, we believe that in the future it will be essential, first and foremost, to work to strengthen the rule of law and establish inclusive democratic institutions in Guinea-Bissau, as well as to promote national reconciliation and sustainable development. It is also crucial that the various efforts, initiatives and mechanisms deployed in the field can maintain political and operational coherence, reflecting and responding to the needs and priorities of all sectors of the population. To that end, increasing the involvement of women and young people in the political life of the country is vital. In that regard, we would like to welcome the establishment of the Bissau-Guinean Council of Women, which seeks to improve the participation of women in peacebuilding, reconciliation and the political processes at the national level.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the importance of maintaining and strengthening the support and assistance of international and regional communities in these efforts. We particularly want to highlight the coordination between the Peacebuilding Commission and UNIOGBIS, as well as the involvement of the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the European Union, among others.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I would first like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Aristides Gomes, Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau, as well as to join other speakers in congratulating Special Representative José Viegas Filho on his appointment as Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) and assuring him of our full support in discharging his responsibilities. We would also like to thank him for his briefing on the situation in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of UNIOGBIS over the past six months. We believe that the mission should be provided with all the support it needs to carry out its mandate effectively.

We would like to thank Ambassador Mauro Vieira, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and Ambassador Antolio Ndong Mba, Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012), for their useful briefings on the basis of their engagement with various stakeholders during their recent visit to Guinea-Bissau. We also thank Ms. Elisa Tavares Pinto and all the Bissau-Guinean women for their important advocacy work for peace.

We welcome the progress made in resolving the political and institutional crisis in Guinea-Bissau and commend the country's political stakeholders for implementing the 2016 Conakry Agreement and demonstrating their commitment to respecting the country's Constitution. The adoption of a new Government programme and State budget is a step in the right direction towards ending the negative impact of the political crisis on the people of Guinea-Bissau. Nevertheless, we also recognize the challenges that must be addressed in terms of tackling the root causes of Guinea-Bissau's problems, and the fact that the situation in the country still remains fragile, thereby emphasizing the importance of sustaining the recent gains. The Bissau-Guinean stakeholders should continue to act in unity. The current developments in the country should be followed closely, and we take note of the report of the Secretary-General and its recommendations (S/2018/771). We also appreciate the briefing by Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba on the outcome of his recent visit, which sent a very good message about the Council's active and continued engagement.

The holding of timely and credible legislative and presidential elections in accordance with the Constitution and the national law of Guinea-Bissau is crucial to consolidating sustainable peace and national reconciliation. We underline the need to provide assistance to strengthen the capacity and independence of key institutions in order to support the electoral process. In that context, we commend UNIOGBIS for extending capacity-building programmes to Guinea-Bissau's security, law-enforcement and defence institutions.

The increasing threat caused by transnational organized crime and drug trafficking is a matter of serious concern that undermines the peace and stability of the country. In that regard, we stress the need for the concerted efforts of the relevant bodies at the national, regional and international levels in order to address the challenge.

Finally, we appreciate the continued support and engagement of the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the European Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and all the other international partners working to find a lasting solution to the crisis in Guinea-Bissau. Their coordinated role remains vital to ensuring sustainable peace and development in the country.

Mr. Albanai (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Aristides Gomes, Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau. I congratulate him on taking office and wish him every success in stabilizing his friendly country. I would also like to welcome Mr. José Viegas Filho, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau, who is here with us in the Security Council for the first time. I wish him success in his tasks, especially at this critical moment of the country's history, and we support him fully. I also thank him for his valuable briefing.

I thank as well Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba, Ambassador Mauro Vieira and Ms. Elisa Maria Tavares Pinto for their informative briefings.

Today, I would like to focus in my statement on three issues: the political situation, the upcoming elections, and transnational organized crime and drug trafficking.

First, we reiterate our welcome of the effective steps taken by all relevant parties to make progress on implementing the first three demands of the Conakry Agreement. However, we believe that there is still room for more progress. We urge all parties concerned to cooperate and implement the remaining provisions of the Agreement in the coming period, especially the necessary reforms mentioned therein, including the review of the national Constitution. I reiterate my country's support for the decisive efforts of the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, and in particular the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which has been continuously engaged in this matter and helped to achieve the progress that we have seen recently.

Secondly, regarding the legislative elections scheduled to be held in November, we share the concerns of the Secretary-General in his most recent report (S/2018/771) regarding the slow implementation of the agreed timetable pertaining to the preparations for the elections. We urge the Government of Guinea-Bissau to step up its efforts to ensure that the elections are held on time and in a transparent and credible manner. My country welcomes the ongoing support provided by the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) to facilitate the preparations for the elections, pursuant to its mandate as set out in resolution 2404 (2018). We welcome the

continued support of international partners to fund the elections, especially the financial support announced by ECOWAS in its final summit communiqué of 31 July.

Thirdly and finally, we are pleased to see the increased efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to prevent drug trafficking and organized crime since the renewal of the UNIOGBIS mandate last February. This matter threatens peace and stability not only in Guinea-Bissau, but also in the region as a whole. In that regard, we call on UNIOGBIS to maintain this approach and to provide the necessary support to all the relevant authorities in the country in order to build local capacity and address this matter.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the presence of the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau, Mr. Aristides Gomes, and are grateful for the information provided by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. José Viegas Filho; Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) concerning Guinea-Bissau; and Ambassador Mauro Vieira of Brazil, in his capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. We offer special thanks to the representative of civil society, Ms. Elisa Maria Tavares Pinto.

Guinea-Bissau continues to face a range of challenges that must be addressed in the framework of the political process and inclusive dialogue that should enable members of the Government, political parties represented in the National Assembly and civil society in general to continue working towards consensus with a view to constructively implementing the agreements that have been reached. Genuine commitment will be required to reach a lasting social and political solution solely in the best interests of the people of Guinea-Bissau and in strict respect for the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

We believe that one of the main structural factors of the crisis, the political impasse, has improved significantly in recent months with the consensus appointment of the Prime Minister and the formation of the Government, demonstrating the crucial role that political will plays in resolving conflicts. In this regard, we believe that the elections to be held this year and next cill be critical. To that end, the commitment of the international community over the short term will therefore be essential as the primary condition with a view to providing relevant and timely financial and technical support to the updating of the registry of voters and strengthening of electoral mechanisms so as to ensure the holding of transparent, inclusive and ultimately peaceful elections.

At the same time, in the context of State stability and security issues, the fight against drug trafficking, transnational crime and impunity must also be priorities. To that end, the United Nations has a key role to play in promoting development, strengthening and upgrading State capacities, and reducing vulnerability to drugs and crime by strengthening the justice sector and police. The international community must provide Guinea-Bissau with the assistance it needs to enhance its control over its coastline and airspace and to train members of the relevant State institutions.

We commend all efforts of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and its Mission in Guinea-Bissau, and the contributions of the European Union, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries and the important work of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) to bring the parties to the conflict together and promotie dialogue. We welcome the work carried out by former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Modibo Touré, as well as that of the current Special Representative and head of UNIOGBIS, Mr. José Viegas Filho, who has made continuous coordination with all levels of the State a priority. In this regard, we believe that the work of UNIOGBIS must be strengthened and focus on initiatives to continue creating opportunities for dialogue and providing technical cooperation in the security sector. We believe that such efforts will contribute to the consolidation of an inclusive Government.

We also commend the work carried out by the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, led by Brazil. We underscore the importance of entrenching the configuration's links with the Security Council in terms of coordination, information exchange and active participation. At the same time, we welcome the initiative of the National Forum of Women and Girls for Peace in Bissau. We believe it essential to incorporate a gender perspective and women's participation into mediation and dialogue.

In conclusion, we reiterate that there can be no development without peace or peace without development. We therefore believe it imperative to

redouble our joint efforts for the stabilization of Guinea-Bissau. We have also reiterated that sustainable peace must be attained through political tools to find negotiated political solutions. In this regard, in order to achieve stability and sustainable peace and Guinea-Bissau, we must ensure the well-being of the population and of the most vulnerable sectors.

Mr. Lie Cheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We welcome the presence with us here today of the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau and the statements delivered by the various briefers. We also listened closely to the statement by Ms. Pinto.

We have observed notable progress in Guinea-Bissau over recent months. In implementing the Conakry Agreement, the parties in Guinea Bissau have reached agreement on forming an inclusive Government, reconvening the National Assembly in plenary session, and the date of legislative elections. China welcomes this progress. Regional and subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union, the European Union and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, have played a significant role in overcoming the political crisis and helping the parties to engage in dialogue to resolve their differences.

Currently, the situation is largely stable in Guinea-Bissau. Nonetheless, the country faces challenges in its efforts to improve economic and social development, to combat drug trafficking and to make progress on the political process. China calls on international donors and partners in multilateral and bilateral cooperation to continue to support Guinea-Bissau and to build its capacity to improve the lives of the population. We hope that the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Guinea-Bissau country team, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and others will provide targeted assistance to Guinea-Bissau based on the country's actual needs.

China has always supported African countries in their efforts to find African solutions to African problems. We call on all parties in Guinea-Bissau to work in the long-term interests of the country by finding consensus and by using dialogue and consultation to overcome differences, seeking the stability and development of the country and striving to improve the lives of the population. China has worked together with the international community, including ECOWAS, to promote dialogue and communication among the different parties in the country and to maintain stability and sustainable development in Guinea-Bissau and West Africa as a whole. That can play a positive role.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

We are pleased to see the Government under new consensus Prime Minister Gomes, whom we welcome today, now working towards legislative elections on 18 November. Holding free, fair, credible and transparent legislative elections in 2018, in accordance with the Constitution and national laws and commitments, is critical.

Discussions on a stability pact, flowing from the Conakry Agreement, have also started the process of reflection on longer-term reform to the security sector, justice, administration and the Constitution. These will help Guinea-Bissau to achieve political stability and sustainable peace over the longer term. As our civil society briefer made clear, an inclusive approach, particularly including women, will be vital.

The United Kingdom is grateful to the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) for its work in the country, realigning its work to its revised mandate. In particular, we welcome the support of UNIOGBIS for legislative elections and political dialogue.

With regard to sanctions, we are satisfied that targeted sanctions are having the intended impact, limiting the influence of those under sanctions to have a disruptive impact on the Conakry Agreement and providing a disincentive to military entry to politics. The United Kingdom supports the scheduled review of European Union and United Nations sanctions in summer 2019, after the presidential elections.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Gomes (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in French*): Today's consideration of the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/771) on developments in my country and the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) gives me the opportunity to thank the Council for the special and

sustained attention that it has focused on my country over the past two decades.

Allow me to take this opportunity to also express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report and for his continued efforts to help ensure peace and political stability in our country. I thank his Special Representative, Ambassador José Viegas Filho, for introducing the report and thank him and his entire team in Bissau for the remarkable work they are doing.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the members and the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Mauro Vieira, who recently visited Guinea-Bissau. This was his second visit, which highlights his personal interest in and commitment to stability and progress in our country. We thank him for his encouraging briefing and greatly appreciate his objective and confident view of our country. We also thank Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba, Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) concerning Guinea-Bissau, for the work he carried out with total objectivity.

Six months ago, the Security Council engaged in timely and serious consideration about what could or should happen in Guinea-Bissau, given the numerous internal contradictions and the persistence of a political impasse that seemed insurmountable. As the Council knows, the Conakry Agreement, which was to serve as a road map and mark the way out of the crisis, has been difficult to implement, in particular because of the differing, even contradictory, interpretations that have hampered it. As a result, its validity and binding character were called into question beginning the day following its signature, on 14 October 2016, in the capital of the Republic of Guinea, by some of the participants in the negotiations conducted under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) mediator, the President of the Republic of Guinea, Mr. Alpha Condé.

I will not rehash the many ups and downs of Guinea-Bissau's recent political history, since the successive reports that have been submited to the Security Council in recent years make ample mention of them. I would rather, if I may, dwell on the organization of the legislative elections that are due to take place on 18 November, that is to say, in less than three months.

A new hope was born in Guinea Bissau following the Lomé agreement of 14 April, thanks to the fruitful impetus of the ECOWAS member countries, whose tireless support and active solidarity I should like to salute here and now. In that regard, I am pleased to highlight the leading and decisive role played by all the Heads of State of the Economic Community of West African States, and thank them for their understanding and for having always been at our side in the search for a consensual and lasting solution to the political crisis in Guinea-Bissau. In particular, I thank Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, and Mr. Faure Gnassingbé, President of the Republic of Togo, for their invaluable and fraternal support in their capacity, respectively, as mediator and outgoing Chair of our subregional organization.

Indeed, thanks in particular to the persistent efforts of ECOWAS and the good will of political parties, civil society and other important actors in Guinea Bissau, the political crisis, which had raged practically uninterrupted since 2014 and made it difficult for Parliament in particular to function fully found a happy outcome, thereby enabling the appointment by the President of the Republic, Mr. José Mário Vaz, of a consensus Prime Minister, whose primary responsibility is to create the necessary conditions for the holding of legislative elections on the scheduled date.

The inclusive Government that I have the honour to lead took office on 26 April. A calendar had already been adopted two months prior to that date. Nevertheless, the Government was able to catch up in the process of organizing elections without cutting any corners.

It is not unusual, after such a long period of crisis in a country as fragile as ours, for it to be difficult and even laborious to quickly restore a climate of trust between political parties and other protagonists in national life. One of our major concerns since we set about carrying out the task entrusted to us has always been to prioritize dialogue. We have decided, whenever possible, to take no major decisions that commit the parties represented in our Government without consulting with them first. Let me stress that ours is a consensus-based and inclusive Government. Indeed, in our current context, it is not advisable to adopt unilateral acts that could upset the balance that we are still trying to establish and that might have a negative impact on the electoral process and, ultimately, on the organization and the success of the elections.

It is true that the holding of elections is essential to political stability in Guinea-Bissau. However, it is also true that Guinea-Bissau has experienced successive political crises for more than two decades, despite its long-standing tradition of success in organizing five different rounds of elections since the establishment of a multiparty political system in the country. In other words, it is entirely legitimate to question the real sources of political instability in my country, which arise on a recurring basis. The correct answers to those questions will lead us to a diagnosis that is likely to provide strategies for all stakeholders to follow in the current crisis with a view to its definitive resolution.

The recurring political crises in Guinea-Bissau involve a number of factors, including the following elements. The collapse of State institutions following the failure of the economic development of our national post-independence project has had a considerable impact on shaping the political crises that we have witnessed to date. That widespread situation is characterized by social and political malaise and has engendered classic survival strategies across all fields to access the fragile State structures of Guinea-Bissau, including enormous vulnerability to transnational and organized crime.

As a result of those crises, the gaps among social groups are growing. Individuals who should in principle make up the elites within the State institutions are instead obliged to be part of an everyone-for-themselves system. That approach to socioeconomic survival is encouraged by some who exploit the institutions by monopolizing them rather than by serving the State. Therefore, we have for years seen a succession of progressive monopolization processes by individuals and groups of individuals, most often organized into political parties. Those political entities end up evolving only around projects of pure and simple predation on our meagre national income. As these resources dwindle, the more fiercely the battles rage among actors who seek to take advantage of the rare sources of financing, which are the ministries, independent funds, State enterprises and projects financed by donors.

While it is true that such political struggles over various sources of State income exist everywhere, we must point out that they have become exacerbated in my country by the following factors: the collapse of an entire system regulating access to State institutions; the total or partial loss of legal and regulatory mechanisms that regulate access to institutional posts; the total or partial absence of rules protecting different professions within State institutions; the loss of the tradition of merit-based promotion, and the collapse of the principle of organization according to which each post must correspond to a well-defined task.

The context of such structural State failure is exacerbated by a Constitution that is not harmonious or sufficiently clear, which makes political governance even more difficult. The Constitution, which should be nothing more than a basic law of provisory political compromise and which was drafted for that purpose at a specific time more than 30 years ago, remains unchanged in its most important aspects, including the distribution of powers between the two heads of the executive branch, namely, the Prime Minister and the President of the Republic.

One of the consequences of the failure of the national project of the post-independence period, with its range of individual and collective disappointments, was the withdrawal of different social and ethnic groups. That has only reinforced the idea that it is everyone for themselves in the management of the State of Guinea-Bissau. As a result, crises arise one after another and resemble each other. That is why the State must be rebuilt through reform of the defence, security and justice sectors and the whole range of institutions allowing a return to regulation, which would facilitate competition and make it harder to wage war. It would also stimulate further growth through investment, creating more income to distribute and therefore fewer political parties trying to prey on public funds.

Once that vision shared by the Government and the international community has been consolidated, we could negotiate the restructuring of our cooperation and the coordination of aid. All cooperation agencies in the country would be reconfigured with a view to supporting the country in its reforms once they have been prescribed and perhaps even the subject of a round table.

Such an approach could be launched immediately after the legislative elections and allow us to respond appropriately to the current and legitimate questions that are being posed. For example, is the presence of UNIOGBIS still useful in Guinea-Bissau after more than 20 years? What about the presence of the ECOWAS mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB)? In our opinion, it is necessary to strengthen the international presence while reshaping it in response to the needs of the reform and rebuilding of the State. We believe that cooperation between the United Nations and the Government

following the legislative elections should be based on the principle of strengthening the Government's capacity to carry out reform. With regard to the presence of ECOMIB, it would be desirable for it to be able to carry out on the ground the additional mission of supporting us more closely in the reform process in general and in particular in the defence and security sectors.

If all the measures that I have just cited are to succeed, Guineans must come to an agreement among themselves before the elections. It is in that spirit that I proposed to the political parties represented in our Parliament the adoption of a stability pact, the draft of which is still the subject of discussions, which I personally led on 20 August. Those consultations will be broadened to take into account the point of view and contribution of civil society and all those who are willing to participate in improving its content and promoting its adoption. We are convinced that the stability pact, once adopted with the shared support and commitment of all, will contribute greatly to lifting spirits and to forging a feeling of national unity of action at all levels in the judicious, effective and responsible management of the destiny of our people.

The free, transparent and credible elections sought by all can happen in Guinea-Bissau only if we ensure in advance the involvement of all, without exception, in choosing the method and specific technical conditions that will allow them to take place. A reliable electoral census, undertaken in full transparency, under the conditions stipulated by the electoral law and without eliciting suspicions of manipulation or fraud, is a sine qua non condition for success. That is the bet that we have made, and it is certainly the path that the Government as a whole has chosen to follow. That is why I took the time to recall the negotiation among the political parties regarding a well-defined process that has proved to be the best suited to the electoral census.

The organization of elections at the national level is never an easy task, even for the richest countries, where the democratic system is firmly and sufficiently anchored in their values. In the case of our country, Guinea-Bissau, I must say that the difficulties that we face are still numerous, but they are not insurmountable. Certain aspects related to the agreed choice that we have made with regard to the electoral census and to the printing of voting cards are described in the report under consideration. In that regard, I would like to remove all ambiguity and to affirm that we are sparing no effort to ensure the holding of legislative elections in our country on the scheduled date of 18 November.

That said, I again call on the international community to keep its promises and, above all, to honour its pledges because at the moment the international community is not contributing a penny to preparing and, ultimately, to holding the census that is due to start. Currently, only the Government, with its meagre resources, is dealing with that very burdensome task for the State budget. That is the mandate that I have received, and it is a responsibility that I, as Prime Minister, intend to fully assume, with the support of all members of the Government.

Given the delivery schedules for the biometric registration kits that we ordered from abroad, and which we paid for through our own funds on deposit with the United Nations Development Programme, and in order to be able to meet, as far as possible, all the stages of the electoral process, we appealed to brotherly and friendly countries, such as Timor-Leste, Nigeria, Mali, Angola and Cabo Verde, to provide us on a temporary basis with some of the equipment for voter registration at their disposal, which will allow us, with the goodwill of all political actors of our country, to initiate operations in the coming days and to anticipate the identification and full registration of voters throughout the national territory. Allow me to express our deep gratitude to all those countries for their great support and solidarity. Ultimately, we will make use of the kits provided by Timor-Leste and Nigeria to address the electoral census arrangement, which we have negotiated with the political parties.

Our Government has made an exceptional effort to contribute to the financing of the legislative elections, the organization of which requires considerable funds that, unfortunately, we alone are not able to ensure. There is currently a significant financial gap that needs to be urgently filled. That is why we have sought the help of our development partners and the international community in general. In that regard, I take this opportunity to very warmly thank all countries and institutions, including the ECOWAS Commission and the West African Economic and Monetary Union in particular, which have been willing to help to ensure the availability of the necessary funds in the form of pledges that have yet to be disbursed to us. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Government of Portugal, which, as in previous elections, has provided us with a significant amount of materials.

Admittedly, the organization of the legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau on 18 November is not an end in itself. However, it is clearly a decisive step

towards restoring political stability in our country, consolidating the gains of democracy and strengthening the rule of law. Over the past two decades, we have faced difficulties of all kinds. However, we hope that a national surge will emerge. I am convinced that a better awareness of the real issues — in particular, the ongoing pursuit of the improved social well-being of our people — is possible in our country. We have every reason to assert that our people — the people of Guinea Bissau, who are a peaceful, hospitable and noble people — are ready to demonstrate once again their civic and political maturity and their commitment to further working, alongside other peoples of the world, to build a more just, peaceful, secure and prosperous world for all.

At the beginning of my remarks, I said that two decades ago — to be more precise, in June 1998, the date of the outbreak of an armed conflict that proved to be devastating and whose consequences we still suffer today — the situation in Guinea-Bissau has been on the agenda of the Security Council. Was it not the Secretary-General of that time — the sorely-missed Kofi Annan, an illustrious son of Ghana, his native country, and of Africa, where he was raised, a citizen emeritus committed to the world, and to whose memory and unforgettable work I respectfully pay tribute — who recommended to the Security Council the establishment of an effective political structure in Guinea-Bissau in 1999?

Twenty years later, where are we? The question indeed deserves to be asked and calls for reflection. In that regard, I am pleased that the Secretary-General has indicated in his report that he intends to make recommendations to the Security Council on a new configuration of UNIOGBIS, which no doubt will better meet our common desire to achieve greater efficiency and further results, including by rationalizing resources and focusing on targeted actions that can have an impact immediately, or at least in the short term. I am thinking in particular but not only about strengthening the rule of law, protecting fundamental freedoms, matters related to the existence and functioning of an accessible, effective and fair justice system, the overarching issue of gender, the increased participation of women in society in general, and in particular their rightful place in all political and economic areas, and the effective exercise of power, as noted by Ms. Tavares Pinto in her most edifying briefing. We are, in any case, ready to participate actively in such consideration.

The crisis situation in Guinea-Bissau is not inevitable. We have known periods of great stability, during which most of our efforts were focused on the problems of development and creating better living conditions for our people. Our country has many strengths for building a better future for its population and for providing genuine opportunities for the education and flourishing of its young people in particular.

The citizens of Guinea-Bissau, our countrymen, are not bellicose people. On the contrary, we are a united and peaceful people. In the recent past, our soldiers have participated, honourably in United Nations peacekeeping missions. Guinea-Bissau served on the Security Council in 1996 and 1997 and assumed the presidency 22 years ago this month. At that time — that is to say, at a time when our country recorded notable economic growth and showed promising development indices — no one would have imagined that, two decades later, we would be here to consider how to unite our energies and resources in order to rebuild a State that many years squandered in political conflict have weakened to the point of failure. As we have seen elsewhere, especially in Africa, that is no easy task, but for our part we are firmly resolved to succeed in turning the situation around so that our country can assume its rightful place among the community of nations. It is that rightful place — that of a dignified and respectable country conscious of its national and international obligations — that we wish to rediscover and restore within the international community.

I conclude by vigorously reaffirming that the situation prevailing in Guinea-Bissau is not irredeemable; it is within our power to change course. Not only do we have the ability, but we, the citizens of Guinea-Bissau, ultimately bear the responsibility to do so. Such is the new path we wish to blaze — a course that will allow us to renew the institutions of our Republic, crucially through the transparent holding of free and credible legislative elections on 18 November. This path towards a stable Guinea-Bissau will allow us to build peace, democracy, social justice and respect for human rights, and thereby a hopeful and prosperous future for our country and its population.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.